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a plea for liberal
culture

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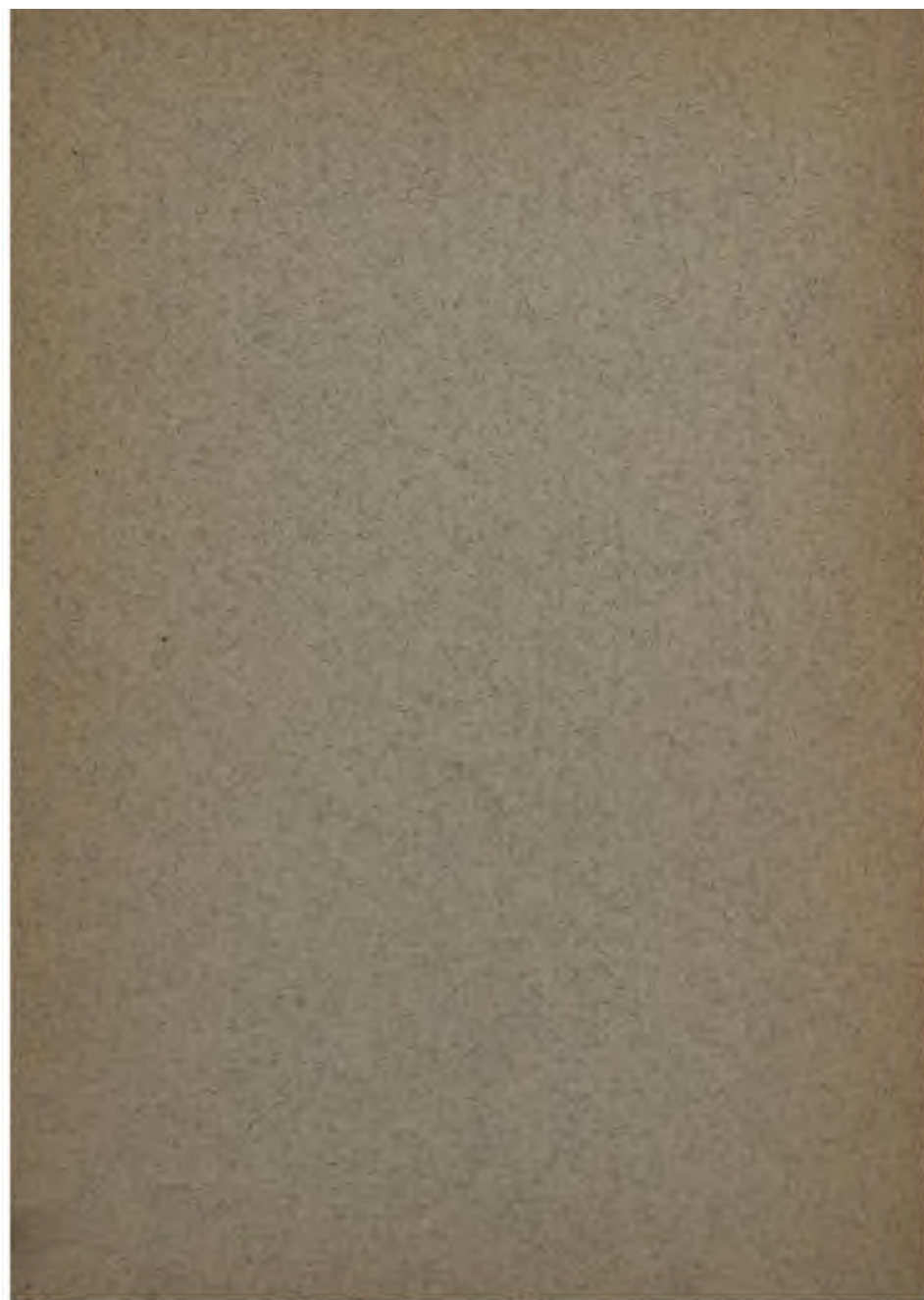
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W. H. P. 1893

A PLEA
FOR
LIBERAL CULTURE.

BY JOSIAH PARSONS COOKE.



A PLEA
FOR
LIBERAL CULTURE.
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JOSIAH PARSONS COOKE.
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MEMORIAL.¹

IT is with great regret that I find myself obliged to dissent from the opinion of a majority of my colleagues with regard to the shortening of the undergraduate course of this College, and that I must regard the measures which have already been taken in this direction as of far more serious import than they are apparently regarded by most of those with whom I am associated. It is only my earnest conviction that those measures are fraught with great peril to the cause of liberal culture in this community which leads me, in opposition to a majority vote of the College Faculty, to urge the Board — with whom the final decision now rests — to prevent their consummation. I feel that the character of this community has been to

¹ To the Board of Overseers of Harvard College, in accordance with their vote requesting any member of the minority to present his reasons for opposing the plan of the College Faculty for the reduction of the College course, a plan which was adopted in March, 1890.

a large extent moulded by the liberal culture of the College, and is constantly sustained by the associations which cluster round college life, and that any measures which tend to impair this culture or weaken college class associations will cause irreparable injury not only to the College, but also to the community and to the nation.

As it seems to me, through the influence of the elective system we have been gradually drifting into a dangerous position, which recent action has only more clearly defined, in changing the basis of our first degree in arts from a period of residence to a number of courses of study. All this tends to give to our college course the tone of an educational mill, rather than of a studious retreat. It tends to substitute for the influence of lofty associations and refined intercourse the feverish acquisition of a definite amount of knowledge in the shortest time. It tends to replace the contemplative life of the scholar by the restless rivalry of the market; and is, in my view, a yielding of the great purposes for which universities were founded to the commercial spirit of the age.

Believing, as I do, that a prolonged period of quiet study guarded from the restlessness of active life is not only an inestimable privilege to our young men, but also of the greatest value to the active community

which they are soon to direct, I look with extreme jealousy on any measures which tend to shorten this period or impair its influence. The difference between sixteen and eighteen courses may be of small importance; but the difference between four years of quiet study and three years of busy acquisition of technical knowledge is world-wide.

Liberal education is not merely a question of acquisition, but much more a question of growth; and the acquisition is chiefly of value in so far as it directs and stimulates the growth; nor is it growth in knowledge merely, but growth in all the attributes of the highest manhood. Harvard College cannot compete with masters who teach any language in twelve easy lessons; but if we do our duty, our College can be made the field in which growth in character, as well as in scholarship, shall be carefully guarded and fostered. Growth cannot be measured in a number of academic courses. It cannot be forced beyond a very limited extent. If over-stimulated, it will not be healthy; and if our sons are to grow to the full measure of educated men, we must not grudge Alma Mater the necessary time.

The value of class associations in extending the influence of the College over the subsequent life of its graduates is a fact of profound significance. Similar

associations have been diligently fostered in professional and technical schools ; but their influence is comparatively feeble ; and the comparison plainly indicates how great must be the loss if the true spirit of liberal culture were replaced by a mere rivalry in the acquisition of useful knowledge. Moreover a large number of our students never have gained, and never can be expected to gain, more than very moderate attainments in any subject. This very large class of college graduates will always be educated more by associations and personal influence than by actual study of books. They may never be distinguished as scholars ; but they constantly acquire a high degree of culture, and give a tone to the community in which they live ; and through them the College wields a very great power. To such men the class associations are the one feature of their life among us which they most prize, and which really does more for their education than all the college exercises combined ; and any measures which tend to shorten the term of residence or break up class associations will lessen the influence of the College on the community. That the measures under discussion will have this effect no one can question.

When it is said that the degree should be based on residence, it is of course understood that a certain

minimum attainment must be enforced by examinations ; and as thus understood residence is the usual basis for the first degree in arts in all schools of liberal culture. That on such a basis degrees may be unworthily bestowed is granted, and so they may be on any basis on which an institution dependent for its support on the good-will of its patrons may be governed. Examinations in a certain number of miscellaneous courses, in regard to which nothing is fixed but the number, are certainly no adequate safeguards. The requisition of residence at least ensures a prolonged association with the forms of learning, and thus secures a certain amount of culture.

But if examinations on a certain number of miscellaneous courses are an unsatisfactory basis for a pass degree, they are a still less satisfactory basis for a degree with honors. No possible standard of comparison can be found between courses on the most diverse subjects, given by teachers using methods utterly unlike, and estimating proficiency in wholly different ways. It is notorious that some of our courses demand of the student more than twice as much time and attention as others, and that even the very best students when electing a difficult subject often take some easy course as what they call "a soft snap," in order to gain the necessary time. Under such cir-

cumstances what definite significance can there be to sixteen, eighteen, or any other number of courses as the standard for a degree?

It is said that the courses may be graded. But how are they to be graded? And who is to grade them? How is a course which involves chiefly delicate manipulation or careful observation to be compared with those courses which imply critical acumen, profound research, or deep thought? Is the Faculty to grade them, consisting, as it does for the most part, of men each engrossed in special studies, and naturally attaching great value to the peculiar form of discipline which has attracted him? The more it is considered, the more impracticable will the idea of grading be found to be; and it will be seen that the inequalities must be accepted as a necessary result of an elective system. With a prescribed period of residence the evil is not serious. Good scholars take pride in electing the hard courses; and the soft courses serve to lubricate the running gear of our system. But abandon the requisition of residence, and put a premium on securing the degree in the shortest possible time, and it will be easy to foresee the fate of the hard courses which reflect honor on the scholarship of the College.

In classing a course as soft or hard we by no means prejudice its educational value. It is the great virtue

of our elective system that it cultivates the power of observation of the naturalist and the manipulation of the experimenter, as well as the critical skill of the linguist or the introspection of the mental philosopher; but the only common ground on which all scholars of whatever name may meet is a true university, which after an adequate preparation prescribes only the faithful and successful use of a definite term of residence, attested by examinations or otherwise, as the condition of its honorable recognition.

But granting the importance of a prescribed term of residence, why are not three years sufficient, as in English and Continental universities?

First, because for our pass men the conventional four years of our American colleges are all fully needed to gain that knowledge, experience, and self-control, to acquire those literary or scientific tastes, to become imbued with those large ideas and noble motives, to form those scholarly associations and to cement those friendships which are at once the insignia and the pledges of liberal culture. This class of men can, as a rule, afford all the time demanded, and so far from asking for a reduction, appear to be almost unanimously opposed to the proposed change. And no wonder; they regard their college life as a great privilege, and look forward with regret to the time when they must go

forth to the battle of life. Why should we wish to shorten these halcyon days? And where can our sons grow into that manhood which will win the battle under better and safer conditions than here?

Secondly. Four years of residence are required in order to secure from our best men that scholarship for which the college is now distinguished. That scholarship represents the very best attainment which school and college together, under present conditions, can produce in the prescribed time. The stimulus to exertion is already very great, — too great, as some of us believe, for the physical well-being of our educated class; and no one who knows our best scholars can maintain that they can make any better use of their time than they actually do. To lessen that time means therefore simply to cut short that scholarship; and — what is worse — to cut it off as it is approaching fruition.

There are among the minority of the faculty those who have been long and earnestly laboring for the advancement of the scholarship in their departments; and can they look on with indifference when by a small majority vote the slow growth of a quarter of a century is suddenly lopped off before their eyes?

The practice of the English universities, so often cited, is no precedent for us, since the cases are not

in the least degree parallel. At both Oxford and Cambridge higher scholarship is undoubtedly reached than with us, although only on very narrow lines. But, as every one knows, the competition for the great prizes at the English universities begins long before the men go into residence ; so that the upper forms of the great public schools must be regarded as an integral part of the college life ; and, if measured by the time devoted to competitive work, their full course of liberal culture is even longer than here. Moreover, it is becoming more and more the custom for the honor men not to go up for the final examinations until after four years of residence at the university.

In former years it was the custom of the Phillips Academy at Exeter to enter their candidates to our Sophomore year ; and the practice had no bad effect on our scholarship, for the same obvious reason that a corresponding rule has no bad effect in England. If we could push back our Freshman year into the preparatory schools, we might possibly reduce our term of residence to three years, without endangering our scholarship. But this cannot be done ; and if it could be done, the age of graduation would not thereby be reduced, nor the demand of the Medical Faculty satisfied. The practice is possible in England

simply because the competition for scholarship takes place along narrow lines of study, which can be followed as effectively at the school as at the college. It was possible with us on the old required system; but as soon as our courses were multiplied on an elective system, Exeter was obliged to give up its former practice. No school can be expected to have the means of carrying forward all the courses of our Freshman year. If they had the means, there is no reason why they should not go further, and develop into colleges themselves. In many of our departments the education given in our Freshman year can only be provided by a well-endowed college. This education is the necessary basis of future scholarship; and for the reasons already stated, such scholarship as we now attain cannot be matured in less than four years. To diminish the period must then, as we have claimed, have the effect of cutting off our scholarship just before fruition.

The practice of Continental universities has been cited in favor of the radical measure under consideration; but these institutions have absolutely nothing in common with ours. In European countries the only courses of liberal culture at all comparable with those of an American college are given in the higher schools, in which — although the institutions are

often called colleges — the pupils are kept under strict school discipline, and with which no one ever dreams of associating the idea of an Alma Mater. After the school the student enters at once on his professional studies at the university; and although the so-called philosophical faculty of the German university is sometimes compared with an American college, it is really as professional and technical in its tone and modes of teaching as are the older faculties of theology, law, or medicine, which together with the first complete a first-class university of the European type. It is only the courses of the higher schools just mentioned which can be compared with those of our colleges; and they, although permitting none of the freedom of intercourse allowed to American youths, engross fully as much of the energy of the rising generation.

It is true that the European student usually leaves school to enter on his professional studies between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, — the same age at which Boston boys usually graduated from Harvard fifty years ago. Since then the average age of graduation from the college has been greatly advanced; and on this fact has been based in part the demand for the shortening of the college course. The writer regrets the change as much as any one; but

he does not believe that it is a change which the college authorities can in any way control. The advance has taken place along the whole line of education from the secondary school to the professional diploma. It is obviously due to an increase of wealth and population in the country, — an increase of wealth which enables the patrons of the college to keep their sons in pupilage for a longer average time; and an increase of population which has increased competition, and thus augmented the average age at which a man can gain a livelihood in the learned professions. If on an average a medical man cannot earn a living by his profession before he is thirty years old, there is no urgent necessity that he should enter the Medical School before he is twenty-three. As we have no power to fix the final goal, we cannot shorten the course by merely shifting the intermediate stages; and all artificial inducements to enter the profession will only intensify the struggle for life which is the great cause of the advance of age we are discussing. If so, medical education cannot be aided by the terrible sacrifice of liberal scholarship which is demanded in its name.

Were it important to bring evidence in support of the position taken in the last paragraph, we need only ask the Board of Overseers to compare the

present requisitions for admission to Phillips Exeter Academy with those for admission to Harvard College half a century ago. The present average age of the boys who enter at Exeter is almost the same as that of those entering Harvard at that period; so that the world-wide difference in the two sets of requisitions very fairly represents the average difference in the attainments of boys at the same age fifty years ago and now. The comparison is most instructive, and shows beyond a question that for the loss of time in education that has taken place in this community since 1840 neither the college nor the secondary schools are responsible, but solely the schools of primary instruction. If the loss is a real one, it is there and there only that the remedy should be applied. But, as before said, we do not believe that the remedy is within the control of any university boards; and if the community can afford to allow their sons more time for growth in manhood, it may seriously be questioned whether there has not been a gain in healthy vigor worth all the cost.

There is a large class of American teachers who, having received all their higher education in Germany, are enamored with German methods and modes of thought. With them the German university is the type to which they would be glad to conform our

own educational methods. They regard the American college simply as the fitting-school to their ideal Germanized American university, and look forward to a near future when this incumbrance can be thrown aside, and all college teaching relegated to inferior institutions. They look on Harvard College very much as we regard the introductory schools which form such essential features of most of the colleges in our Western States. The prevalence of this idea is shown in the recent foundation among us of so-called universities either with no undergraduate course whatever, or in which this feature is so subordinate as almost to escape notice; and the competition of these institutions is unquestionably one of the underlying motives of the present movement. These teachers are perfectly consistent in advocating a reduction of the college course; for this is a movement in the direction they desire, and can have only one end,—that of giving up the college course altogether. For if the policy which has been inaugurated is carried to its legitimate conclusion, Harvard College will be squeezed out between the professional and the preparatory schools. We have no issue to make with the German system of education. Their gymnasia and universities are admirable institutions, adapted to the country in which they have grown up, and

to whose government and modes of life they have become conformed. But they are essentially not republican, and never were meant to be nurseries of free men or fountains of liberal thought; and between the avowed aims of teachers who wish to Germanize our system and the opinion of those who regard the American college as the only safeguard of liberal culture in this country the difference is wholly irreconcilable.

It is a dictate of ordinary prudence that no important part of a complex system which has slowly grown into an organic whole, adapted to its environment, should be altered except after the most careful consideration and cautious trials. Our American system of education has grown with the country and become adapted to its needs. The parts of this system are so intricately interwoven that no one can foresee the effect of a serious change. Such changes should only be made with the general consent of those who have had the largest experience with educational problems. Moreover such changes should never be made on speculative grounds, but only in answer to imperative and wide-spread demands. In the present case not only is there no such general demand, but the change is urged in behalf of what has been shown to be a mere handful of our students. That a change

which imperils the liberal scholarship of the country should depend on a very small majority of the faculty of a single college would be a strange anomaly ; and it is fortunate that their vote must be revised by a board which is closely in touch with the educated community that the college serves ; a community intensely interested in liberal culture and in maintaining the high standard of scholarship which, through the devotion of its teachers, the college has won.

LECTURE.¹

ALTHOUGH it is regarded as important to preserve the integrity of our college terms by holding the first exercises at the appointed times, yet the attendance at the opening of the college course is necessarily so irregular that it does not seem wise to take up the thread of a philosophical system like the theory of chemistry until the class has been more completely organized ; and I therefore propose to occupy the time this morning with some general remarks on the aims and methods of undergraduate study. Such a discussion is the more necessary because our age and our country are dominated by a commercial spirit, which is wont to undervalue and neglect the great privileges that a large university offers and is expected to protect.

You come to college rather than to a technological or professional school, for what is called liberal cul-

¹ Delivered to the Freshman Class of Harvard College, at Cambridge, Sept. 25, 1890.

ture ; but although you may have a clear idea of the end to be gained by securing the accomplishments, the associations, and the credentials of a gentleman in the highest sense of that term, yet few of you, I suspect, have so far analyzed the conditions as to be able to state clearly either in what liberal culture consists or in what it is distinguished from professional or technical training.

As is often the case with abstract problems, we shall best prepare the way for a clear comprehension of the subject, and at the same time reach at least some practical conclusions, by first considering in what liberal culture does not consist, and thus unmasking some of the counterfeits which pass under that name ; and this we shall accomplish without trespassing on any debatable ground, and while confining ourselves to considerations which all must admit are just.

In the first place then, no command of material resources, and hence no amount of wealth or of political influence, can conceal the want of liberal culture. Wealth may give the means and furnish the opportunities of attaining liberal culture, but it cannot buy it ; and the attempts of wealth to masquerade in the guise of culture only renders more hideous by comparison the gaunt skeleton which the disguise, however brilliant, always fails to hide.

In the second place no amount of professional or technical skill constitutes liberal culture; and we need not go far to find illustrations of this truth, for who has not known men of the highest reputation in almost every walk of life whose professional skill only made the narrowness of their education and the limitations of their view the more conspicuous; and it is the men of this class who are most anxious that their children should enjoy the advantages of a culture which they could not command or failed to secure.

In the third place no degree of scholarship in a narrow field can be regarded as liberal culture. To the young student, this statement may seem more paradoxical than the last, but a short experience with life will show that it is none the less true; and the tendency to specialization of the present day is one of the great dangers with which the spirit of liberal culture has to contend. I freely admit that the tendency of all true scholarship is liberal, and that the large-minded scholar who thoroughly explores any field of knowledge, however narrow, will be so impressed with the grandeur of creative thought in all its modes of manifestation, whether in mind or matter, that he cannot fail to gain those larger views of life, and those nobler aims in conduct, in which

liberal culture finds its true expression. Nevertheless the fact remains that for most minds a very restricted field of study implies narrow thinking and narrow acting.

In the fourth place no breadth of knowledge will save any man from narrowness of thought and action if that knowledge is held and fostered in a commercial or selfish spirit. Liberal culture seeks knowledge for its own sake and for man's welfare, and not for the gold it may bring or the reputation it may entail. We are intelligent witnesses of the sublimity of creation, and members one of another; and the noblest attitude of man is to worship and to serve; and no culture is truly liberal which does not lead the mind into this posture toward knowledge and toward mankind.

In the last place, and as a necessary inference from what has just been said, liberal culture does not depend on the nature of the study which may engage the student's attention or suit his tastes. Provided only narrowness of view is avoided, all studies, if pursued in the right spirit, are good. All questions as to the relative value of classics, mathematics, or science are idle and unworthy of the attention which a miserable jealousy has given to them. All are alike good if studied in the true spirit, and all are equally

bad if followed solely for commercial aims and personal aggrandizement. A noble queen of England, about to brave with her husband the dangers of the Last Crusade, once said to her anxious attendants: "The way to heaven is as easy through Palestine as through England or through my own native land;" and liberal culture can be attained as surely through one realm of Nature as another.

If, then, liberal culture is not to be secured by wealth, by skill, or even by learning alone, and if it is not the privilege of any one school or province, how is it to be gained? I have already virtually told you, and I have only to repeat: Liberal culture can only be acquired by the pursuit of knowledge for the truth's sake and for the amelioration of mankind. To honor truth, to redress human wrongs,—let these be your aims, and the noble end will be secure.

Yours is a great privilege. To spend the most formative period of life in the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake, shielded from the responsibilities of a toiling world, is, I venture to say, the greatest privilege that can be conferred on earth. Great monarchs have renounced sovereignty to seek in vain in the cloister the privilege which has come to most of you as a birthright. Use, I entreat you, this precious gift thoughtfully and advisedly. This college

places on you the final responsibility of the selection of your studies. Make this selection with the best judgment and advice you can command. Of course even when aided by the best advisers you are liable to mistakes ; for in this world there is nothing more difficult than to give unprejudiced advice, and he would not be an enthusiastic teacher who did not honestly exaggerate the importance of his own favorite study. But mistakes in your choice are not irremediable ; and, as I have said, all studies pursued in the right spirit are alike good, even if the choice may not have been the best possible for the individual. But, whatever may befall, if you take for your guiding motives truth and service, you must come out right in the end.

There are, however, two dangers incident to our college system of which in the interest of liberal culture I would forewarn you.

In the first place, there is a tendency to specialization which should be guarded against. In an elective system it is natural that men should select studies which they can easily master, or which are congenial with their tastes, and within certain limitations such a selection is wise ; but it will not secure liberal culture if it excludes any of the great fundamental branches of human knowledge. Moreover, specialization is al-

most necessary to high scholarship in any department of knowledge ; but unless it is based on a broad culture already gained it may be questioned whether the scholarship is worth the cost. In my judgment such special attainment had better be reserved for a graduate course of study. During your undergraduate life you have an invaluable opportunity of gaining a general survey of the whole field of human knowledge, — an opportunity which in all probability will never come again. Do what you can toward high scholarship, but do not neglect this golden opportunity of widening your knowledge. Of course the field of knowledge is now so broad that it is impossible for any student to explore the whole ; but he can gain a general view of the field, and no man can be regarded as liberally educated who does not know something of the literature and history of his race, as well as something of the wonders of the creation of which he is a part. This broad culture is to be gained not so much by the study of books or by attending special courses, as by availing yourselves of the numerous opportunities for general culture which the University offers, and also by the discussion among yourselves of the various topics which your studies suggest.

And here I would add a few words on the value of college associations, because I feel that they are a

more important element of liberal culture than those who are occupied with the details of instruction are wont to recognize. I regard such an institution as this of more value as offering a favorable field for growth in manhood than because it furnishes instruction in all departments of human learning. Four years of quiet continuous study before the mind is preoccupied and harassed by the duties and anxieties of the world, amidst surroundings favorable to the growth of lofty sentiments and noble resolves, have, in my opinion, more influence on character than any scholarship however profound or any accomplishments however brilliant. The silent influence of quiet study, with the meditation which lofty associations have evoked, has done more to educate the great men of the race than all the learning of the schools.

I shall never forget the impression produced by the daily prayers chanted under the lofty cathedral arches of an almost deserted English town, where only the prescribed two or three were gathered together; and in the uplifting of the soul under those solemn associations the conviction was forced upon me that a large part of what is noblest and most potent in English thought was nurtured under just such influences as those services created, but whose cost in money the utilitarianism of the present day would grudge. It is

true there are no precisely similar associations in our new country; but the Greatest Prophet the world has known nurtured his inspiration in a nobler temple, which stands ever open to all of us, whose pavement may be a wilderness, but whose dome is spangled with the everlasting stars.

Do not think that I value scholarship any the less because I dwell on the importance of the associations and companionships which you will find here. I do not forget that it is scholarship which more or less directly produces the influences and gives to the associations their value. Nor do I forget that scholarship is of inestimable worth to the community, and that this great acquisition a university is bound to foster and enlarge. Still, conspicuous scholarship or accomplishments are the privilege of only a few, while noble character may be acquired by all those who meet in these halls.

I am also well aware that college is a field where the enemy may sow tares, and that here, as elsewhere in human society, the wheat and the tares must grow together until the harvest. The most that those entrusted with the care of the College can do is to see that the tares do not choke the wheat. The opportunities are for you to choose. The harvest is for you to secure. There can be no manhood without choice. There can be no virtue without the possibility of evil.

It is because I am persuaded that college association and companionship, inducing as they constantly do the long-continued and frequent discussion of great themes, are such essential conditions of liberal culture that I look with great concern on any movement that aims to shorten the term of college residence, and feel that the time devoted to this formative period of life in our American colleges is none too long. It is for this reason that I attach so great importance to a prolonged residence as a necessary condition of that recognition which the College gives by its first degree in arts; and in comparison with this fundamental condition the number of courses studied, or the precise grade of minimum scholarship accepted, seems to me of small account.

College associations and companionships are the only basis of what we call "class feeling," and although this sentiment has been often perverted, it is the strongest evidence of the value of the phase of college life of which I have been speaking. I well know how artificial college public opinion is, and that, it often countenances practices and conversation which are unworthy of a Christian gentleman. Still I also know that beneath the exuberance of youthful folly there is frequently concealed a noble enthusiasm; and the survival of this sentiment through all the vicissitudes of life most markedly indicates how great

must have been the influence of the college course, apart from all the learning acquired, in moulding character and swaying motives.

In this connection a few words about college athletics will not be out of place, since there is no field of college activity in which the evil of specialization is so dominant at the present time. The great importance of physical culture in any system of education, and the inestimable value of "*mens sana in corpore sano*" are admitted by all; but here, as elsewhere, moderation is the only safe course; and, for most men at least, an essential condition of healthy intellectual growth. The fallacy that exhausting muscular work is compatible with a high degree of mental activity need only be stated to meet its own refutation; and it is not necessary to appeal to the law of conservation of energy to show the absurdity of the proposition. The few examples of distinguished athletes who have been good scholars are not safe guides for ordinary men, who have only a limited supply of nervous energy, and will have none left for brain work if they exhaust their whole stock in bodily exercise. Moreover, indiscretion in this direction may entail the most serious consequences.

Unfortunately there are few children of families that have enjoyed affluence through several genera-

tions who have not inherited some bodily weakness. The vital membranes may be strong enough to bear all necessary work during the full term of a useful life, but will yield if subjected to excessive strain. Such latent weakness may be compatible with a large amount of bodily vigor and full muscular development, and may pass unnoticed until the fatal strain comes. The medical statistics which have been gathered in relation to the Oxford and Cambridge racing crews show a frightful mortality from heart disease; and although I know of no similar statistics in regard to our own men, yet the number of cases of the same disease resulting from overstrain that have come to our knowledge here is sufficient to excite the utmost alarm. It is the duty of those who hold the control to keep athletic contests far within the limits of the endurance of the men engaged. Strength and skill can be shown as effectually on a short course as on a long one; and there can be no question that athletic contests which turn chiefly on endurance are a more dangerous battle-field than most military engagements, and the wounds inflicted are none the less to be dreaded because so rarely immediately fatal. Certainly take all due care of the body as the shrine of the soul; but keep under the body and bring it into subjection, and suffer not the corruptible flesh to

deaden the ever-living spirit within. Better, far better, the extreme folly of the anchorite than spiritual death!

Besides the danger of specialization, our system is open to another danger, against which you should also be on your guard. There is a tendency to give an industrial and technical tone to some of our courses of study. The commercial spirit of the age presses upon us from every side. Our students, so far from being contented to seek truth for truth's sake, demand more and more courses which have a direct bearing on practical life, and value only such knowledge as can be sold in the market. They care very little for chemistry as a part of the grand scheme of Nature, and seek solely a knowledge of chemical processes which may help them to gain a situation in a dye-shop or an iron foundry. They think it a waste of time to study crystallography, although only thus can they gain any conception of the structure of the minerals and rocks of the globe; but they all seek to be taught how to recognize and assay metallic ores. This tendency, if allowed free play, would convert our College into an industrial school, and is a more dangerous foe of liberal culture than the evil first mentioned, because more insidious. It ought to be resisted at every point.

I say this although knowing very well that a large number of those whom I address have their careers to achieve, that college must be a preparation for active life, and that already the *res angustæ domi* may be pressing heavily on many hearts. Still, I feel most strongly that our colleges should be reserved sacredly for the cultivation of the liberal arts. They have an utterly different mission from technical schools; and this mission is incompatible with the commercial spirit. Moreover the college has a duty to the community; and liberal culture is a virtue which elevates the State; and this ennobling grace the college was founded to cherish and to foster. Finally, the technical schools are always open, and furnish the industrial education which so many demand.

But why make so much of liberal culture? Simply because it is the great safeguard of our civilization, and the only hope of future progress. Our present civilization, based on the right of the strongest and on the law of supply and demand, will certainly be overwhelmed unless a higher authority than the commercial spirit can be enthroned. Such an authority exists, and has spoken,—“Man shall not live by bread alone.” There is a nobler life than that,—the only life from which you can look back without remorse, or to which you can look forward with hope.

